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CANDID THOUGHTS

*Hist. of Swed. & Denmark vol 2.*  
ON

THE PARALLEL

(LATELY PUBLISHED)

BETWEEN

THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION, K

AND

THE FORMER GOVERNMENT OF SWEDEN.

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B Y

The PUBLISHER of the authentic Translation of  
the STATE PAPERS, relating to the Change  
of the Constitution of SWEDEN.

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O B S E R V A T I O N S  
O N  
T H E P A R A L L E L.

**J**USTICE requires that we allow this Author clearness of conception ; and a depth of thought : but he has not been careful enough to inform himself of facts : and without these, reasoning is vain.

His Parallel is just upon the whole ; and happily conceived ; but tho' in general true, it fails in a variety of particulars : indeed so many, that we at once lament, and wonder at his errors ; and while we admire that acuteness of comprehension, by which he has penetrated the depth of the subject ; we blush at the false steps he has made upon its surface.

The British constitution has indeed all that preference to the former Swedish Government, which he has declar'd: in ours there is that Balance he observes; by which it has been preserv'd in the midst of the worst commotions: this balance the Swedish constitution wanted; and by the want of that, it fell.

This is the ground-work and foundation of the Parallel: and this is perfectly just: but the particulars on which the superstructure stands, are so full of mistake and misrepresentation; and facts are stated so erroneously, that the person who takes them as there establish'd, will never form a right idea of what was the Swedish Government, at the period he means to describe.

Nor can we allow any greater accuracy in the state he has given of the form at this time establish'd: yet it does not seem that he has intended to mislead his Readers; but that he has mistaken the matter himself: and in that rapidity, which is twin-born with genius, has overlook'd the means of information.

There

There is the greater cause to lament this, because the ways to a more accurate knowledge were easy. 'Tis plain by the whole tenour of his performance, that he believes the present Swedish Government to be entirely arbitrary: whereas there needed only, to have shewn him this mistake, to have read with care the present form of it. Indeed the Swedish tongue is not much understood in England; and at that time there was no translation of this paper into our language; unless we are content to call by that name, the account of it publish'd in news-papers. Now, a genuine version has been publish'd: perhaps that candour which attends always on true genius, will lead him to acknowledge the mistake.

'Tis to a like source perhaps we are to trace those errors also which respect the former constitution of that kingdom. He has faithfully and fairly quoted the authority on which he has adopted most of his opinions: but this authority is GERMAN: 'tis not from a SWEDISH AUTHOR, but



from one of another country, whom perhaps he also understood imperfectly, that he has received his accounts of the Swedish legislation : and therefore they have been open to a thousand errors. 'Tis the more pity that it should have been so ; because the access to better sources of information was at hand ; unless a want of the Swedish language bar'd the passage : and surely some means should have been found to open this, not unfurmountable, obstruction.

An accurate Author, who was to give an account of the constitution of a great kingdom, certainly would wish to take it from a native ; not a stranger : for the precision of an Historian is one thing, and the flourish of an Orator is quite another : the first should take alone what is best founded upon truth ; the latter always will adopt what shall best suit his purposes.

The instances of mistakes in the Parallel, whether from this, or from whatever other source, are too numerous to recount ; and many of them too perplex'd to enter upon at large : but 'twill be justice to the former,

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as well as to the present constitution of Sweden; to the King, as well as to his people; to place a few of the most important here in their true light.

This Author gives it, as a general observation, that what power is taken from a King, will be given to some other body: and he fancies this to have been exemplify'd by the Senate's heretofore getting what the King lost in Sweden. He understands that the King there had not a power of convoking the States; but that it rested in the Senate: whereas a better knowledge of that Government would have informed him, this power reside in neither distinctively; but IN THE KING AND SENATE.

He gives to the Senate also great power in appointment to offices of trust and profit; not knowing many of the public boards appoint their own: and uninform'd that even in that share the Senate had in respect of the others, of nominating three persons for the King's choice; that, even there, it was not as an independent SENATE that

they possessed this power, but as TRUSTEES FOR THE PEOPLE, which they truly were, not in name only, but in fact; being effectually answerable for all they advised. This the several changes of the Senators within the last ten years may testify.

Another prerogative which this Author gives the Senate at the expence of royalty, is that they appointed two persons, under whose guidance alone criminals could be pardon'd by the King, after condemnation: but this is contradictory to fact: it is true this power had limitations, but within these, the King only had the great prerogative of mercy: and tho' he heard the arguments of others, himself alone determined. No one will now be blind to the general purpose of this Author. The former Government of Sweden was to give little, or no power to the King; in order that the present Revolution might appear the greater: but to allow less power to the Swedish Kings before this change than they truly had; and to give more to them

them than they possess after it, is not the right way to state a Parallel.

In the same stile we are informed, that the power of war and peace were not heretofore in the Kings of Sweden, but in the Senate: but why will an author write without due information? the matter is quite otherwise: the Senate in this case, so far as they did act, acted still as TRUSTEES FOR THE PEOPLE, not as an independent body. Neither in these great affairs, nor indeed in any, was it their place to act as independent: 'tis true they sometimes have attempted it; but it is equally true, that when they did, they have been depos'd for the attempt.

To bring this to the test of fact, and real history, in regard to the last war in 1757, which the King personally disapprov'd: the Senate, when they deliberated on it, presumed so far as to explain what the former Government meant by fulfilling treaties: and on that principle, as guarantees of the treaty of Westphalia engaged in a war with the King of Prussia: but what was  
the



the consequence? the States severely told them, *you should have called us together: it was for us, not you, to debate on this: we should have explain'd to you the treaty of Westphalia.* This was the rebuke; and they submitted to the constitutional censure.

In 1756 when the King ADOLPHUS FREDERIC refus'd his signature: 'twas not the SENATE, as this Author thinks, that order'd a new one to be made, and us'd it without his permission: it was the States that thus controul'd the King. Nor indeed was the signature a seal, as there represented; but a plate engrav'd with the letters of the royal name: this is of less concern; but still there is a praise that should belong to accuracy.

There is a wonderful difference we must needs tell this author, between the STATES OF SWEDEN and the *Swedish Senate*; and if in other places, as in this, he mistakes one for the other, it must make sad confusion. This he ought indeed to have well known also; that instead of that continual  
opposition



opposition between the King, and the Senate, the Swedes consider them in many things as one; and he would have escap'd a multitude of errors if he had known that when they say, the KING did this, they mean the KING AND SENATE. What a multitude of frivolous cavils we thus see might have been sav'd by knowing but the common forms; in a country too inconsiderately describ'd! if there ever were disputes they have been between the King and these persons as Trustees for the People: not as the Senate.

But even the States themselves had not the powers represented in this Parallel. The Author says, they could, at their own pleasure, turn out persons concerned in the Administration: but he should have known this power was very limited. Over the Senates it prevail'd entire, as it ought; but they were only a few of the offices in the Administration, over whom this body had constitutionally, such authority.

'Tis strange the Author should suppose the deputies of the two Orders of *Burghers* and

and of *Peasants* had little share in power : I can assure him they had it equally with the other Orders : and that 'twas idle in his Parallel to boast the dignity of the British House of Commons, in contradiction to their ineffectual strength, because our House can enter upon any subjects that they shall please ; for each of the Swedish Orders, the least, as well as greatest, could and can enter on what subject they shall chuse ; can make what motions they shall please, and send them to the others : so can the British House of Commons also act : so, and no otherwise.

Even the Swedish Committee, altho' explain'd by this gentleman in an added note, is yet mistaken totally : but 'tis a German note ; and not a Swedish : therefore the wonder ceases. This Author ought to have known, altho' the infallible *Achenwall* perhaps did not, that this in Sweden was a standing Committee ; formed of the best skill'd persons on each subject : nor was it at all bias'd by the *mistaken* number of the Nobles Deputies. Number

ber is without weight in these collective forms : our House of Commons are more numerous far than our House of Lords ; yet the whole body of these Commons make but one acting power ; and the Lords, tho' much fewer in number, are exactly equal in effect.

The difference between active and passive shares in legislation, on which this writer is so large, is evident enough : and we should here allow him all his reasoning on the share of power, vested in the lower Orders of the States, if the facts, on which those reasonings are establish'd, had not been just disprov'd before.

It is a strange mistake to think the Senate and Committee had the essential part of legislative power in Sweden ; nor is this fancy strengthened, but overthrown, by the repeated error as to the number of the Nobles Deputies.

I should feel pleasure in bestowing many praises upon the Author of that Treatise ; for there are in it a thousand marks of genius, and of spirit ; but when the facts are all  
mistaken,



mistaken, genius is misplac'd, spirit is thrown away, and arguing comes to nothing.

I must farther explain the state of the Swedish Nobility, because he has push'd it so far, and press'd so many consequences from it : and I shall first say, he mistakes equally its nature, its number, its disposition, and its power.

In talking of the vast multitude of the Swedish Nobles, he confounds *Nobility and Gentry*: the Noblesse of France are innumerable ; but the Nobles, effectually such, are few in proportion.

In reckoning up the numbers of the noble families in Sweden, I must acquaint him, that he counts them *dead and alive* : the detail appears plainly enough to have been taken from a register, where names are not struck out when the family becomes extinct. He will be surprized to hear, but it is a solemn truth, that of those he reckons, at least nine hundred families do not now exist : and yet the number there are, is far from being either the desire, or boast of the Swedish Nobles : They would have  
fewer.



fewer. 'Tis not there, as at Venice, where beyond the antient number, no new Nobleman can be created. In Sweden any deserving man may be raised to the rank of Nobility; and tho' the Nobility become numerous by this, it does not make them powerful, as the exclusive form in Venice, does. All the deductions this Author has so ingeniously made from their situation, would be true; but that the foundation is thus totally mistaken.

To think the power of the Swedish people has been weaken'd by a division into the Orders of the States, is palpably an error. The Orders of Sweden always were all four of equal power: the Clergy were indeed a different body, and relatively more powerful than the others: they stood in a peculiar light. The others were representatives of the people at large; the Clergy only of the Clergy.

The two Orders of Burghers, and of Peasants, were neither over-aw'd, nor over-rul'd by the others; 'tis a mere error in this

this Author to suppose it : 'tis true indeed the Peasants made no part of the Secret Committee; but this was with their own free consent, and honest approbation; and warranted by the constitution. They knew their place and office; and they perform'd it with integrity in the public assemblies, and in the other Committees: but not pretending to be competent judges of calculations; and the foreign negotiations, and the like; they knew they were unfit for Secrets of State; and seldom wish'd to be appointed to this Committee.

The suppos'd influence of the Swedish Nobility in all things in the former constitution is an imaginary principle: they had it not; they had their share as one of the four Orders of the States; and they had nothing more. Others were richer by far than they: and we know the weight of wealth.

I wonder the writer of this Parallel should venture to assert, that all places of trust and profit in the State were reserv'd to the Nobility: 'twas not in England this should have

have been said; where we have seen a Swedish *Minister* who was not a nobleman. If I must be particular, 'tis Mr. *Wafenberg* I speak of; a private gentleman; who held that post here about the year 1741.

That some have thought the trial by jury took its rise in Sweden, may serve as plausible ground, whereon this author might build his complaint of its suppression: but he must now be told, that fact, like all the rest, has been mistaken. That cannot be abolish'd, which never had existence: and as to the juries of Sweden, they never were more than petty businesses in the remote Provinces; and such they are there to this hour.

The exemption from taxes, or the unequal claims of them on Noblemens estates, for which the *immortal* \* Mr. Marshall has been quoted; is also another matter absolutely mistaken. The truth is this, and no other. There are in Sweden, some few

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\* A man cannot die who never was born. Enquiries have been hitherto fruitless.



estates of antient Noblemen, not subject from the beginning to taxation: but 'tis the nature of the estate, and not the nobility of the possessor, which gives this privilege. These Saterier are, as certain places, permitted to remain on their old tenure: they hold the exemption, tho' a private person, by the King's permission, buys them: and several of them at this time are in the hands of proprietors no way connected with nobility.

The very rank of the nobility in Sweden, which this author tells us, they are so frequent in thundering in the ears of others, is by no means so sacred in its nature, as his account would indicate. What will he say, when he shall hear that in Sweden, the King's Commission always takes place of it? 'tis most true that whoever bears the King's commission has rank before a nobleman, who is not honoured with that duty.

Were these the triumphs of the Swedish Nobles over their King? Is this the little weight the Kings of Sweden had against their Nobility before this Revolution?—'Tis

indeed



indeed certain that in Denmark the overgrown pride of the Nobles a century ago, threw all the power into the hands of the King: but 'tis a grievous error to suppose this, and this only caus'd the Revolution, the happy Revolution which has now taken place in Sweden. 'Tis plain this gentleman has never read the Swedish history: he would have found else that quite contrary to his surmises, the Nobles have at all times not oppress'd, but taken part with the People, against arbitrary power, wherever it was found.

'Tis true, the Queen Christina's abdication was not altogether of her free choice: she had impoverish'd the kingdom, and she fear'd the consequences: but what an amazing error follows in this Parallel! 'tis not the Government of Charles XI. that is now in some degree re-establish'd; 'tis that before this Charles; the fairest parts of which are now reviv'd, improv'd, and rendered permanent, as well as beneficial.

Nor was it the nobility alone, whatever this Parrallelist supposes, who rescu'd Sweden

from the miseries her Charles XII. had plung'd her in: it was the joint work of the Nobles and the People: and in the present instance all that the King has done to save his country, became practicable only from this cause, that the balance here first nam'd, had been destroy'd.

Nor are the consequences, any more than the preceding, at all like what this Author ventures to lay down from them. He asserts absolutely that the States are to take nothing under their consideration but what the King shall lay before them. I fear the news-papers were the best authority on which he has proceeded: but if he will look into the papers which have been now authentically published, he will need no other answer. To read the Form of Government is to see all his errors fully refuted.

He will find there the States may deliberate, with different opinions from the King's; and how, and in what manner all is in this case to proceed: each having a negative power, as in England.

He will see that the power of new taxes,  
given

given into the hands of the King alone, is only in the possible case of the Realm being actually attacked ; and he will see those taxes are to cease with the occasion. 'Tis so throughout ; and yet are these mistaken facts the grounds of an uncandid prophecy, that Sweden, like France, will sometime or other throw off its parliaments entirely. If the ground of this speculation were firm, we would examine the superstructure farther ; but if we have shewn that to be rotten, the other falls without a new attack.

The Order of Peasants, whatever may have misled this ingenious writer, do actually interfere in public and important cases as much as the others : and present experience has contradicted his doctrine of their insignificany. They have appear'd in another light on the late great occasion.

But what shall we expect from a writer, who, with a great deal of oratory, has so little real knowledge ? See this exemplify'd in a piece of recent history. He tells us, and he grounds a great deal upon it, that when

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on the death of Charles XII. the States settled the crown upon his sister Ulrica, she was the person next in the order of succession; and observes, that the whole of the imagin'd choice was an affair of mere formality.

Who is there does not know that Charles XII. had two sisters: the eldest of these was Princess of Holstein; and her children were at that time living: but yet Ulrica, who was regent when Charles XII. died, was freely chosen.

There was much more than formality in this transaction: the States inform'd her first, that she had no right to the crown; but that they would place it on her head if she agreed to certain stipulated conditions: they were propos'd, and she accepted them; she was placed on the throne; and Sweden regain'd its liberty.

The present King, wise, noble, excellent, and beloved Prince, took the customary obligations; observ'd the establish'd forms; and reign'd, by an hereditary right, over a loyal people. But these obligations and

these



these forms were ill observed by others : the real spirit of the constitution was lost, that balance on which all depended was destroy'd. He found the people were oppressed ; he saw the Parent Country torn by factions ; and saw 'twas foreign gold which strengthened those oppressions : he saw that unless some effectual remedy were apply'd there would be no longer any constitution. He reasoned with the States ; he heard the cries of his people ; and he has rescued them from all their sufferings ; he has given them a Form of Government, in which he has voluntarily put many restraints upon his own power : he has declar'd his ambition to rise no higher, than that he be the first among a free people : and it must be that people's own fault now if they do not become great and flourishing.

F I N I S.

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